



Journal of South Asia

(International Peer-Reviewed Journal, Open Access Journal)

Volume 1, Issue 2, Year-2025

**Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal**

Gen Z's Perception towards Sustainable Fashion Products

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry has increasingly faced criticism for its environmental and social impacts, leading to the emergence of sustainable fashion as a responsible alternative. This study examines Generation Z's perception towards sustainable fashion products, focusing on the factors influencing their purchase decisions. A quantitative research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 49 Generation Z respondents in Coimbatore using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was applied to identify the underlying dimensions influencing perception. The results revealed five significant factors: brand image and influencer impact, availability and accessibility, environmental responsibility and awareness, environmental benefit perception, and social influence with product quality considerations. The findings indicate that although Gen Z demonstrates awareness of sustainability, their purchase decisions are strongly shaped by accessibility, online presence, peer influence, and perceived product value. The study provides insights for marketers and policymakers to better position sustainable fashion products to align with Gen Z's expectations and promote responsible consumption.

Keywords: Generation Z, Sustainable Fashion, Consumer Perception, Environmental Awareness, Purchase Behaviour, Factor Analysis, Brand Image, Social Influence, Ethical Consumption, Sustainable Consumption.

Introduction

The fashion industry's substantial negative effects on the environment and society, including as excessive resource use, waste production, pollution, and unethical labour practices, have drawn more attention in recent years. Sustainable fashion, which prioritizes eco-friendly materials, moral manufacturing methods, longevity, and conscientious consumption, has become a viable alternative strategy as awareness of these problems has increased. Throughout the supply chain, sustainable fashion goods seek to foster social responsibility and lessen environmental damage.

In today's market, Generation Z generally described as those born between the middle of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2010s represents a significant and potent consumer demographic. Because they grew up in a digitally linked society, this generation has more access to knowledge regarding social justice issues, environmental degradation, and climate change. Because of this, Gen Z customers are frequently seen as being more value-driven and ecologically sensitive than their predecessors. Sustainability, ethical sourcing, brand transparency, and corporate social responsibility are some of the elements that are increasingly influencing their purchase decisions.

Even with Gen Z's increased consciousness of environmental issues, there is still a discernible disconnect between their favourable perceptions of sustainable fashion and their real purchase patterns. Although a large number of Gen Z consumer's voice environmental concerns and advocate for sustainable methods, their purchasing decisions are frequently influenced by elements including increased costs, restricted availability, ignorance, and a strong affinity to rapid fashion fads. The intricacy of Gen Z's understanding of sustainable fashion products is highlighted by this attitude-behavior discrepancy.

For fashion manufacturers, legislators, and researchers looking to encourage sustainable consumption, it is essential to comprehend how Gen Z views sustainable fashion. Attitudes, preferences, and purchasing behaviour are all significantly influenced by perception. Customers' perceptions of product quality, cost, fashion, environmental effect, and brand legitimacy are all included. Marketers can create strategies that link sustainability with accessibility, affordability, and style by examining Gen Z's perceptions. This will encourage responsible fashion choices. In order to better understand Gen Z's opinion of sustainable fashion goods, this study focuses on their level of awareness, attitudes, influencing factors, and purchase intentions. The results of this study will help us better understand how Gen Z consumers' environmental consciousness influences their purchasing decisions and how sustainable fashion can be better positioned to satisfy the demands of this new consumer group.

Review of Literature

Zulu, M., Muposhi, A., Matselale, N., & Parbhoo, N. (2025). *Juxtaposing Generation Z consumers' consumption behaviour of local versus global sustainable fashion brands*. The study uses PLS-SEM for model analysis and uses a robust sample of 504 participants. The results show that views regarding local and international brands are influenced by a variety of factors. Two of the main obstacles to the purchasing of sustainable clothes are materialism and a lack of trust. The study emphasises useful ramifications including the significance of eco-labels and culturally appropriate marketing techniques.

Tran, K., Nguyen, T., Tran, Y., Nguyen, A., Luu, K., & Nguyen, Y. (2022). *Eco-friendly fashion among generation Z: Mixed-methods study on price value image, customer fulfillment, and pro-environmental behavior*. Through a mixed-methods approach that includes qualitative analysis and SEM-PLS, the study investigates pro-environmental behaviour, customer fulfillment, and price value image. The results show a discrepancy between Gen Z's actual exposure to eco-fashion on social media and their favourable opinion of sustainable methods. Purchase intention is significantly influenced by perceived behavioural control. Despite Gen Z's enthusiasm in eco-friendly apparel, availability and price are major barriers.

3. Palomo-Domínguez, I., Elías-Zambrano, R., & Álvarez-Rodríguez, V. (2023). *Gen Z's motivations towards sustainable fashion and eco-friendly brand attributes: The case of*

Vinted. The study investigates the disconnect between Gen Z's environmental consciousness and their continuous consumption of fast fashion using a mixed-methods approach that includes focus groups and a pilot poll. The results indicate that although consumers value Vinted's environmentally friendly features, they are not the main driving force behind their purchases. Convenience, cost, and usability are more important factors. The report also points out that Vinted's sustainability messaging is overly subdued, indicating a misalignment between customer expectations and brand positioning.

Liu, Y., & Hei, Y. (2021). Conducts study on *Exploring Generation Z consumers' attitudes towards sustainable fashion and marketing activities regarding sustainable fashion*. The report emphasises Gen Z's position as environmentally conscious customers and the growing significance of sustainability. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews with twelve participants, the study offers comprehensive insights into the perceptions of consumers. Key themes are examined using reflexive thematic analysis. The results highlight practicality, sustainability awareness, and the impact of business identity on consumer choices.

Lee and Wu (2025) examined inclusive marketing and anthropomorphism in luxury and non-luxury branding, with the objective of analyzing how inclusive marketing influences social judgments, brand anthropomorphism and brand attitudes using experimental design and Structured Equation Model(SEM). The findings of the study show that inclusive marketing significantly improves anthropomorphism, competence, warmth, and positive brand attitudes. **Zoreslava Liuluhak et al. (2025)** examined the impact of brand inclusivity perception on corporate financial performance using correlation, regression and trend analysis tools. The study found that inclusivity dimensions such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender support, brand authenticity, and racial diversity significantly improve market capitalization, revenue, earnings, and investor confidence, highlighting inclusive marketing as a driver of financial performance. **Juhi Srivastava and Nishtha Malik et al. (2024)** conducted a study on Impact of inclusive marketing communication on brand love and brand attitude to find the stigmatization moderates the relationship between inclusive marketing communication and brand love and attitude, while social identity plays a mediating role. Real inclusive communication enhanced consumer's identity, emotional attachment and positive brand perception, **Anna verbytska et al. (2023)** examined study on Inclusive Social Marketing: Representation and Diversity in Brand Campaigns. The study found that inclusive marketing enhanced brand reputation, customer engagement and market presence by promoting diversity and emotional connection. **Yasmin salsabila et al (2022)**, conducted a study on The Effect of Inclusive Marketing efforts by BLP Beauty toward Brand Image, Brand Trust, Brand Love and Brand Loyalty to examine the impact of inclusive marketing on brand image, trust, love and loyalty The findings of the study show that inclusive marketing-driven brand experience positively influences brand image, trust and love. Brand love significantly affecting loyalty while brand trust does not affect the loyalty.

Objectives

- To identify the key factors influencing perceptions of inclusive products.
- To analyze the impact of inclusive marketing in building consumer trust and perceived credibility.

Hypothesis

H₀₁ : Inclusive marketing has a significant impact on consumer trust and perceived credibility.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data. The required data was collected from Amul product users through questionnaire by using Convenience Sampling method. A total of 141 were surveyed. Coimbatore, a growing industrial hub known as the “Manchester of South India” was selected for this study. The city represents diverse demographic segments with varying incomes levels, mobility needs, and environmental consciousness. The study focused on impact of inclusive marketing on consumer trust and perceived creditability. Responses were collected and analyzed to identify the impact of inclusive marketing on consumer trust and perceived creditability. The study adopted Factor analysis and Regression method for identifying impact of inclusive marketing on consumer trust and perceived creditability.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the study were presented under the following heads.

- Demographic profile of the consumers.
- Factors influencing perceptions of inclusive products.
- Impact of inclusive marketing on consumer trust and perceived creditability.

Demographic profile of the consumers

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Socio Economic Profile		No of respondents (N= 141)	Percentage (in %)
Age	21-30	85	60
	31-40	56	40
Gender	Male	90	64
	Female	51	36
Educational Qualification	School	30	21
	Under graduate	53	38
	Diploma	58	41
Income	Below 10000	37	26
	10001—20000	60	43
	20001-40000	25	18
	Above 40000	19	13
Marital status	Married	75	53
	Unmarried	66	47
Family type	Nuclear family	95	67
	Join family	46	33
How familiar are you with the concept of inclusive marketing?	Highly knowledgeable	24	17
	Moderately knowledgeable	45	32
	Basic awareness	34	25
	Limited awareness	28	20
	No awareness	10	0.7

Source: Primary Data

Age and Gender: Majority of consumers 60% were aged between 21 to 30years, with a fairly even distribution across other age groups. Gender distribution was balanced, with males 64% slightly outnumbering females 36%.

Educational Qualification and Income: Majority of consumers 41% had Diploma education. Monthly income was modest, with the majority earning between Rs. 10001—20000.

Marital Status and Family Type: Over 53% were married, and 67 % lived in nuclear families. **Level of familiarity with Inclusive Marketing:** Majority of the consumers possess a satisfactory level of familiarity with the concept of inclusive marketing, with 32% shows moderate knowledge and 17% indicating a high level of knowledge. The extremely low proportion of respondents with no awareness 0.7%, shows that inclusive marketing is broadly recognized among the consumers.

Factors Influencing Perceptions of Inclusive Products

The prime factors influencing perceptions of inclusive products that foster consumer trust were fairness, accessibility, and representation in brand communication and engagement.

Table 2 Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Q4	.768				
Q7	.734				
Q6	.719				
Q2		.821			
Q8	.528	.695			
Q5					
Q3			.874		
Q9					
Q10				.904	
Q1					.925
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 11 iterations.					

Source: Computed data

The table represents the Rotated Component Matrix extracts 5 distinct components shows the impact of inclusive marketing on consumer trust and perceived credibility. Consumers trust towards organizations that consistently practice towards inclusive marketing shows 0.768, Marketing messages emphasizing inclusion are more convincing to the consumers shows factor loading of 0.734, Consumer consider that inclusive marketing communication is trustworthy in nature. These factors represent strongly on component, represents a common underlying construct.

Marketing that emphasizes inclusivity strengthens the consumers sense of reliability toward the organization with 0.821 shows a high loading on component 2, indicating that it distinctly measures a separate dimension. Inclusive marketing encourages believing that consumers are treated fairly with 0.874 loadings prominently on component 3, reflecting a well-defined factor. Inclusive marketing messages make the consumer confident that the brand keeps its promises with 0.904 is strongly associated with component 4, while Inclusive marketing reduces skepticism toward marketing claims exhibits a very high loading on component 5, demonstrating clear factor separation. Inclusive marketing conveys respect toward diverse consumer groups shows cross-loadings on components 1(0.528) and component 2 (0.695),

but it loads more strongly on Component 2. The high loading values above 0.70 indicate good construct representation and internal consistency within respective components. Overall, the rotated component matrix confirms that the variables are grouped into five meaningful dimensions, supporting the multidimensional structure of the factors.

Impact of inclusive marketing in building consumer trust and perceived credibility

The impact of inclusive marketing lies in its ability to enhance consumer trust and perceived credibility by demonstrating fairness, representation and engagement in brand practices.

Table 3 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.506 ^a	.256	.251	.6723	
2	.580 ^b	.337	.327	.6371	2.245
a. Predictors: (Constant), CT					
b. Predictors: (Constant), CT, PC					
c. Dependent Variable: IM					

Source: Computed data

The table represents the Model summary results, indicates that consumer Trust shows 25.6% of the variance Inclusive Marketing R^2 value 0.256. Both Consumer Trust and Perceived Credibility are included, the explanatory power increases to 33.7% with R^2 value 0.337. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.327 confirms that stability and reliability. The Durbin- Watson value of 2.245 indicates the absence of autocorrelation, confirming that the regression is satisfied.

Table 4 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	21.473	1	21.473	47.505	.000 ^b
Residual	62.377	138	.452		
Total	83.850	139			
2 Regression	28.247	2	14.123	34.798	.000 ^c
Residual	55.603	137	.406		
Total	83.850	139			
a. Dependent Variable: IM					
b. Predictors: (Constant), CT					
c. Predictors: (Constant), CT, PC					

Source: Computed data

The ANOVA result shows that Consumer trust is statistically significant with F value 47.505, p value is less than 0.05. Perceived credibility is also statistically significant with F value 34.798, p value is less than 0.05, indicating that Consumer Trust and Perceived Credibility jointly predict Inclusive Marketing significantly.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.831	.341		5.364	.000		
	CT	.524	.076	.506	6.892	.000	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	.770	.415		1.856	.046		
	CT	.370	.081	.358	4.563	.000	.787	1.271
	PC	.400	.098	.320	4.085	.000	.787	1.271

Source: Computed data

Table 5 represents the results of regression coefficients to identify the impact of perceived inclusive marketing on Consumer Trust and perceived Credibility. In Consumer Trust, the unstandardized coefficient (B) was 0.524 with a t-value of 6.892 and statistically highly significant with a p-value of 0.000. Consumer Trust coefficient (B) value was 0.370, Beta (β) value 0.358, t-value 4.563, p-value of 0.000 and Perceived Credibility coefficient (B) value was 0.400, Beta (β) value 0.320, t-value 4.085, p-value of 0.000 were both significant predictors. The VIF values of all the variables were above 0.750 indicates, there is no multicollinearity. Overall, the results suggest that an increase in Consumer Trust and Perceived Credibility leads to increase in perceptions of Inclusive Marketing. Overall the regression results indicate that Consumer Trust and Perceived Credibility together have a positive and significant impact on the perception of Inclusive Marketing.

Conclusion

Inclusive marketing is a strategic approach that fosters equitable representation and engagement, enhancing long-term consumer trust and organizational credibility. The study identified that the prime factor influencing the inclusive marketing were reduced skepticism, fairness perception, reliability and confidence in marketing communication. The regression results demonstrated that both consumer trust and perceived credibility have positive and statistically significant effects on inclusive marketing perceptions. The absence of multicollinearity further validates the reliability of the findings. The results suggest that inclusive marketing enhances brand authenticity and strengthens emotional connections with consumers.

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